

Getting Ready

Helping your
junior or senior
prepare for
college and career

WASHINGTON
**HIGHER
EDUCATION**
COORDINATING BOARD

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs

GEAR UP is a national effort to encourage and prepare more students from low-income families to enter and succeed in post-secondary education.

Washington State GEAR UP is a partnership of the Office of the Governor, the Higher Education Coordinating Board, the University of Washington and the College Success Foundation.

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COLLEGE SPARK
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FUNDING SUCCESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION



A GEAR UP Publication



CONGRATULATIONS

You've got a student in **high school!**

The next several years will be challenging but also exciting. You'll see your student develop plans for the future, graduate from high school and embark on the journey of college and career.

But what can you do? How can you help your student do well in the last two years of high school and prepare for the future?

Here are **some tips** to make the most of junior and senior year.



11th GRADE

- ▶ Encourage your student to **find a volunteer service or leadership opportunity** at school. Many high schools require students to earn a certain number of volunteer hours to graduate. And both colleges and employers like to see students who have demonstrated responsibility and leadership while in high school.
- ▶ Encourage your student to **register for advanced courses** (such as Running Start, Tech Prep, AP or IB, depending on what your school offers). Also encourage your student to take **math, science, and English** courses each year. These courses are key to prepare for college and career.
- ▶ Schedule time to meet with your student's **advisor**. Learn about **college entrance exams** (for more information, see page __) and find out which exams your student will be taking to be ready for his or her postsecondary plans. Learn what the school will be doing to help your student prepare for these exams. Most students begin taking college entrance exams during junior year.
- ▶ Help your student **identify five to ten "postsecondary" (after high school) programs** that will meet his or her career goals. Use the Internet or library to learn more about these programs. Attend **College Fairs** in your community. Find out if your student's high school will sponsor **college visits** – or if you can take the time to visit a college campus with your student.

12th GRADE

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- ▶ Start **saving money for college**, and review the FAFSA 4caster (www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov) to see what **financial aid** your family might receive.
- ▶ Help your student find a **summer job or internship** to earn money or gain skills for college.
- ▶ Encourage your student to **find a volunteer service or leadership opportunity** at school. Many high schools require students to earn a certain number of volunteer hours to graduate. And both colleges and employers like to see students who have demonstrated responsibility and leadership while in high school – particularly those who stay involved during senior year.
- ▶ Encourage your student to **register for advanced courses** (such as Running Start, Tech Prep, AP or IB, depending on what your school offers). Also encourage your student to take **math, science, and English** courses this year, even if your student has already met the minimum graduation requirements. These courses are key to prepare for college and career.
- ▶ Schedule time to meet with your student's **advisor**. Review the **college entrance exams** your student has already taken (for more information, see page __) and find out which exams your student should take during senior year and how your student should register. If your student is taking **advanced classes**, find out how he or she can apply for college credit.
- ▶ Learn the **application schedule and requirements** for each of the postsecondary programs your student has identified. Work with your student and his or her advisor to help with college applications, personal essays, letters of recommendation, transcripts and test scores. College applications are usually due by January of senior year, but check carefully as some are due earlier.
- ▶ Continue **saving money for college**, complete a **FAFSA financial aid form** (www.fafsa.ed.gov) and help your student **apply for scholarships**. Financial aid applications must be completed along with college applications.
- ▶ Help your student evaluate his or her **college acceptance offers** and make a decision. You will want to consider the strength of the program, cost and financial aid.
- ▶ Encourage your student to **continue to work hard**, even after accepting a college offer. Colleges pay attention to the quality of work students do at the end of senior year, so it's important not to slack off!



College is more important than ever

Fifty years ago, it was easy to get a good job right out of high school. In 1950, **80 percent** of American jobs didn't require any higher education. You could get a job with just a year or two of high school, and you certainly didn't need to go to college.

But things are different now. Today, only **15 percent** of jobs are open to people without "postsecondary" education –

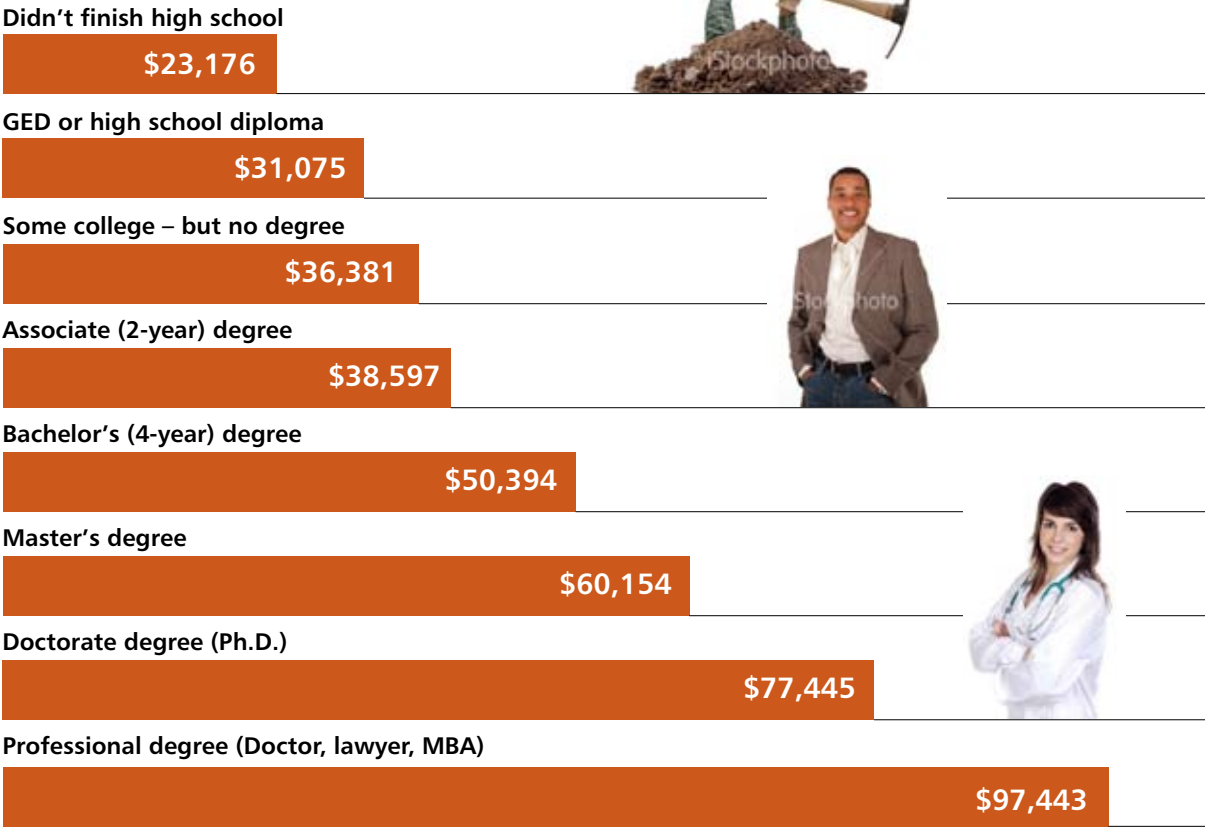
that is, education or specialized training after high school.

Your student will need postsecondary education to succeed. That may be an apprenticeship or community college, a four-year college, or even a graduate degree. There are many different options for postsecondary education. Finding the right one depends on what your student wants to do for a career.

Median Earnings for Workers Age 25 and Up

The skills and knowledge students need to be admitted to college are the same ones they need to succeed at a job. Being **college-ready** means your child is ready to do well in a four-year university, a community college, an apprenticeship or a good job.

On average, people who get college degrees will earn almost **twice as much** money in their lifetime as those with only a high school diploma.



Source: US Census Bureau, Earnings year-round full-time workers age 25 and over, [DATE] www.pubdb3.census.gov/macro/032005perinc/new03_010.htm

What do I want to do?

By junior year, your student probably already has a pretty good idea of his or her interests and career goals. Now the challenge is to find the right postsecondary program to reach these goals – and to make sure your student is ready.

Many high schools ask students to select a **Career Pathway** during freshman or sophomore year. Students then organize many of their elective courses around the requirements for getting a job within that pathway. But some students are still exploring many different options. Ask your student these questions to help narrow down the list of interesting ideas:

DO YOU LIKE?				
working outdoors or solving problems	expressing yourself creatively or performing	organizing things or persuading people	helping other people	working on a team to solve problems
YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN CAREERS IN:				
Agriculture, Science & Natural Resources Pathway	Art, Media, Communications, & Design Pathway	Management, & Finance Pathway	Education, Social, & Health Services Pathway	Engineering, Science, & Technology Pathway
CAREERS INCLUDE:				
Farmer/Rancher Fisherman Forest Ranger Geologist Timber Harvester Veterinarian	Actor Director Graphic Designer Journalist Librarian Spokesperson	Accountant Business Owner Office Manager Salesperson Stock Broker Store Manager	Cosmetologist Doctor Firefighter Police Officer Teacher Travel Agent	Architect Computer Scientist Electrician Engineer HVAC Technician Mechanic

Once a student has identified an interesting Career Pathway, the next step is to identify jobs within that pathway that sound interesting. Students can then learn about the education those jobs require. Sometimes it's possible to get an entry-level job with just two years of college – through an apprenticeship

or a community college – but your student may need more education, more training or a higher-level degree to move up. This chart shows the type of postsecondary education needed for different types of careers. Which of these sound interesting to your student?

Two Years of College (Associate Degree or Apprenticeship)	Four Years of College (Bachelor's Degree)	More Than Four Years of College (Graduate Degree)
Auto Mechanic Commercial Artist Computer Technician Dental Hygienist Drafter Graphic Designer Hotel/Restaurant Manager Medical Lab Technician Insurance Agent Registered Nurse Surgical Technologist Surveyor	Accountant Computer Systems Analyst Dietitian Editor Engineer FBI Agent Forensic Technician Investment Banker Journalist Pharmacist Public Relations Specialist Social Worker Teacher Writer	Architect Biologist Chiropractor Dentist Doctor Economist Geologist Lawyer Librarian Priest or Rabbi Psychologist Public Policy Analyst Sociologist University Professor Veterinarian

MAKE THE MOST OF HIGH SCHOOL



Make a High School Course Plan

Your student will have many opportunities during junior and senior year. But he or she will get only one chance – so it’s important to take school seriously.

The single most important thing your student can do to make the most of the last two years of high school is to **take the most challenging course load possible**. The courses students take in high school matter more to their future success than family income, race or even grades. That’s why involvement and encouragement are so important.

Most high schools ask freshmen to develop a course plan for their years in high school. This plan is your student’s road map to success – in high school and beyond. If you haven’t seen your student’s course plan, make sure to review it. And make sure your student can answer these questions:

What is your Career Pathway? Career pathways are groups of jobs that are based on similar interests, skills, and abilities. Many high schools ask students to choose a career pathway during 9th grade. Career pathways often determine many of the electives students take during sophomore, junior and senior years.

What careers are interesting to you? Which careers in the career pathway sound the most interesting? What education will they require after high school?

What courses will help you prepare? Advanced courses – and courses in math and science – are particularly important. What does your high school recommend? What advanced courses can your student take?

Five tips to help your child make the most of junior & senior year

1. Work hard in core classes. High school students should take Math, Science, English and Social Studies every year, even if your school does not require it.

2. Take advanced classes. Find out if your student’s school offers advanced or honors classes. Your student may be able to get college credit in high school.

3. Take electives in areas that interest you. Encourage your student to explore electives in different areas. There is still time for interesting electives in junior and senior year.

4. Get involved in a volunteer or leadership activity at school. Getting involved will make your student a better candidate for college and careers – colleges and employers want applicants who demonstrate responsibility and leadership.

5. Consult your advisor for help. Your student’s advisor or a favorite teacher can give advice on classes, college entrance exams and the college application process. **Don’t be invisible** – make sure at least one adult at school knows your child and is helping him or her plan for the future.

Sample Course Plan

Freshman Year

First Semester

English:
Math:
Science:
Social Studies:
Elective (Language?):
Elective (Career Prep?)

Second Semester

English
Math:
Science:
Social Studies:
Elective (Language?):
Elective (Career Prep?)

Junior Year

First Semester

English:
Math:
Science:
Social Studies:
Elective (Language?):
Elective (Career Prep?)

Second Semester

English
Math:
Science:
Social Studies:
Elective (Language?):
Elective (Career Prep?)

Sophomore Year

First Semester

English:
Math:
Science:
Social Studies:
Elective (Language?):
Elective (Career Prep?)

Second Semester

English
Math:
Science:
Social Studies:
Elective (Language?):
Elective (Career Prep?)

Senior Year

First Semester

English:
Math:
Science:
Social Studies:
Elective (Language?):
Elective (Career Prep?)

Second Semester

English
Math:
Science:
Social Studies:
Elective (Language?):
Elective (Career Prep?)

Do More than the Minimum!

No matter what you do, it’s important to do more than the minimum. That’s true on the job – no matter what job you have. And it’s definitely true in high school.

The State of Washington has a minimum set of requirements for graduation from high school. Your child’s high school will also have a minimum set of requirements. (These requirements may be the same as the State’s or they may be higher.)

But these minimum requirements may **not be enough** to qualify your student for college or for the career he or she wants.

- ▶ The State of Washington requires **only two years of math** in high school. But most colleges require **three or four years of math**.
- ▶ The State of Washington **does not require** students to take a foreign language. But most colleges require **at least two years**.
- ▶ The State of Washington requires **only three years of English** in high school. But most colleges require **four years of English**.

	State of Washington MINIMUM requirements (Do more than this!)	ENTER Your high school’s MINIMUM requirements	Typical College Requirements	Highly Selective College Requirements	University of Washington Requirements
English	3		4	4	4
Math	2		3	4	3
Lab Science	2		2	3	2
Social Science	2.5		2	3	3
Foreign Language	0		2	2	2
Arts	1		1	1	0.5
Elective	5.5		1	1	0.5
Health & Fitness	2				
Occupational Ed	1				

How does your high school compare? What are the requirements there? It’s important to find out. But it’s even more important to find out what your child will need to do to qualify for a dream career. You don’t want to miss out because your child didn’t take the right courses.

3 high school requirements.

In addition to taking the right classes, your child will need to do three additional things to graduate from high school in Washington State.

1. High School & Beyond Plan. Students must develop a plan for what they will do after high school. And they must show how they used their time in high school to prepare.

2. WASL Exam. Students must pass the 10th grade reading and writing sections of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) exam. Students in the class of 2013 and beyond must also pass the math and science WASL exams.

3. Culminating Project. The culminating project gives students the chance to apply their knowledge in a “real world” context. Most schools have students complete culminating projects during their senior year and set specific requirements for the projects

FUTURE PLANS

Postsecondary Milestones

11th GRADE

► Begin taking required entrance exams

See page 14 for more information.

- No matter what your student wants to do after high school, he or she will probably need to take at least one entrance exam.
- Find out when and where these exams are held, and how your student can prepare.

► Research colleges and programs

Identify five to ten colleges with the programs you want.

- Get information about cost, programs and requirements for each.
- Attend **College Fairs** to learn more. If possible, **visit local college campuses** to see classes.

12th GRADE

► Finish required entrance exams

See page 14 for more information.

- During senior year, your student should complete all needed entrance exams for his or her postsecondary plans. Make sure you know when and where your student will take these exams.

► Apply to Colleges

- Guidance counselors recommend applying to **six to eight** colleges. Your student might want to consider a mix of community and four-year colleges.
- Most **application deadlines are in January** of senior year. Your student will need an application fee, recommendations from teachers, a personal essay, a transcript and an application form for each college.

► Apply for Financial Aid

- **FAFSA.** If you want financial aid, your family will need to complete a FAFSA form and request that it be sent to each college.

► Decide on a College

- Most colleges let students should know in April whether they've been admitted. You can then help your student decide which college to attend.

► Finish the School Year in Style

- Remind your student that even after making a college decision it's still important to keep working in high school. Final grades matter to colleges.

What happens after high school?

No matter what your student dreams about doing, there is a way to get the education and training to meet this dream. Here are some options for education after high school.



APPRENTICESHIP. In an apprenticeship, your student will learn a highly skilled job (in manufacturing or high tech, health care, public safety, cooking, or construction) by working with a skilled expert. Apprenticeships usually last two to four years. They combine on-the-job training with classroom work. Apprentices earn a paycheck.

COMMUNITY OR TECHNICAL COLLEGE. Many students go to community or technical college to earn a certificate in a career or to get a two-year (Associate) degree. Students can then transfer to a four-year college or go straight into the workplace. Careers include Cosmetology, Computer-aided Drafting and Design, Diesel and Heavy Equipment Tech, Medical Office Clerk, or Culinary Arts.

FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE. Students who need more education usually attend a four-year college or university to earn a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree. Students can earn a degree in nearly any subject, from Asian Literature to Chemistry to Engineering.

MASTER'S DEGREE. A Master's degree lets a student move directly into a management-level career in a specialized field. It usually requires at least two years of study beyond a Bachelor's degree.

DOCTORATE DEGREE. A Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), Medical Doctor (M.D.), Juris Doctor (lawyer, or J.D.) degree usually requires at least three years of school after college and sometimes many more.



MILITARY. Some students join the military right after high school or join the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) in college. The military offers many different career and training opportunities... meaning students need to decide what to do before they join.

How do you know what kind of education your student needs?

There are many choices for education after high school. How can you help your student decide which choice is best?

The type of education your student needs will be determined mainly by the career your student wants. Different careers require different amounts of education. In fact, even within the same "career ladder," different jobs may require different amounts of education: your student may be able to get an entry-level job with an Associate's degree, but may need a Bachelor's degree to move up.

Your student's advisor or counselor will be able to help you learn what education he or she needs. You can also learn more on your own by visiting the College Board web site:

www.collegeboard.com

What does it take to **get into college?** **EXAMS**

In addition to completing college applications, your student will also need to take one or more college entrance exam. These exams differ based on where your student wants to attend, but most of them should be taken during junior or senior year.

The chart below summarizes the most common entrance exams for four-year college, community college and the military. Your student’s counselor or advisor can help you learn more.

To attend a four-year college or university, students need to take:	To attend a community or technical college, students need to take:	To join the military, students need to take:
<p>Preliminary SAT (PSAT) Students take the PSAT to prepare for the SAT. They usually take the PSAT in the fall of sophomore or junior year. The PSAT tests on reading, math problem-solving and writing. www.collegeboard.com</p> <p>SAT Reasoning Test The SAT is the most widely used college admissions test. It measures critical thinking, mathematical reasoning and writing skills. Students usually take the SAT in junior or senior year. www.collegeboard.com</p>	<p>ASSET Placement Exam The ASSET tests basic skills in writing, reading and numerical reasoning. It also offers advanced tests in algebra and geometry. Most students take this test in junior or senior year. www.act.org/asset/</p> <p>COMPASS Exam The COMPASS helps colleges determine where to place students. It includes tests in writing, reading, pre-algebra, algebra, college algebra, geometry, and trigonometry. www.act.org/compass</p>	<p>ASVAB The ASVAB assesses new recruits’ abilities and helps place them in positions. It includes eight test areas: general science, arithmetic reasoning, work knowledge, paragraph comprehension, mathematics knowledge, electronics information, auto and shop information and mechanical comprehension. www.asvabprogram.com</p>

College-bound students can also take these tests to help them increase their chances of being admitted or to receive college credit for work they’ve done while in high school.

<p>PLAN The PLAN is an optional practice test for the ACT that gives students feedback on their academic skills. Students take the PLAN during 10th grade. www.act.org/plan</p>	<p>ACT The ACT is another widely used admissions test. Students can take the ACT in addition to the SAT or instead of the SAT (for some colleges). The ACT measures English, mathematics, reading, and science. www.actstudent.org</p>	<p>SAT Subject Tests SAT Subject Tests help colleges decide where to place students. They are offered in many different subjects, including English, History, Mathematics, Science and Languages. www.collegeboard.com</p>	<p>AP Exams Students who take AP classes in high school can get college credit for their work if they score well on an AP exam. AP exams are offered in 22 different subject areas. Students take them in the spring of junior or senior year. www.collegeboard.com</p>
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Paying for College

College can be expensive. But don’t let money stop your student from going to college. No matter what your student wants to do, there’s probably financial aid available to help.

Saving

Saving money ahead of time can help with college tuition. You can save a little or a lot, and middle school is a good time to start saving. The **Washington State Guaranteed Education Tuition Program (GET)** lets you pre-pay the tuition for any public college or university in Washington State. Learn more at www.get.wa.gov

Need-based Financial Aid

Many colleges will help students pay for tuition, fees, and living expenses they can’t afford. There are several kinds of need-based financial aid:

- ▶ **Need-based grants and scholarships:** Grants and scholarships don’t have to be repaid. They’re applied directly to a student’s college costs.
- ▶ **Student loans:** Loans do need to be repaid – after the student graduates. Student loans usually have low interest rates.
- ▶ **Work-study:** Many colleges have part-time jobs available on campus for students who qualify.

Every college has different need-based financial aid. But most of them have one thing in common: they require the Free **Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** to be completed. You can learn about the FAFSA at www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov

Merit-based Grants And Scholarships

Not all grants and scholarships are based on financial need. Students can also get help with college tuition because of high test scores, athletics, being in the military or ROTC, or even because of their background, parent’s employer, or career interests. You can learn more about scholarships at www.hecb.wa.gov/Paying/index.asp

Don’t Worry – You Can Pay For College!

Yes, college is expensive. But it’s well worth it. Research shows that a college graduate earns almost \$1 million more over the course of a lifetime than someone who didn’t go to college.



Help your student use money wisely

Many young people living on their own for the first time have a difficult time balancing all their responsibilities.

One challenge is money. Credit card companies offer college students an irresistible opportunity to spend money – but many students aren’t able to pay back what they owe. The average college student holds three credit cards. And by college graduation, the average student has \$2,700 in credit card debt. In fact, 10% of students owe more than \$7,000 by the time they graduate – and that’s in addition to student loans.

You can help. Help your student set ground rules about spending money and using credit:

- ▶ **Create a budget** and stick to it – and save money for long-term goals, such as a car.
- ▶ **Track purchases** to make sure you don’t spend more than you can repay.
- ▶ Always pay your credit card bill **in full and on time.**



What happens after graduation?

The last two years of high school are an important time. This is when your student starts thinking seriously about what the future will hold... and then takes action to realize his or her dreams.

Deciding on a postsecondary plan, applying, and getting admitted to college are all major accomplishments and show your student’s independence. But your student will still need your help and support – even after graduation, and even after the first semester of college begins.

Here are a few tips to help ease the transition:

- ▶ Help your student get **everything needed for college**, especially if he or she is moving far from home.
- ▶ Make copies of **medical information** and make sure your student’s health needs are covered.
- ▶ Remind students **not to rush decisions** about career or major. Urge them to explore a wide range of options.
- ▶ Encourage your student to **ask questions and seek help** when needed.
- ▶ **Stay in touch** by phone and/or email. Letters, postcards and goody boxes are welcome surprises, especially during mid-terms and finals.
- ▶ **Ask your student** about the college experience.

For more information about the Washington State GEAR UP Project contact:

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